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Announcement by Free East Timor! Japan Coalition of
VTR Release/Press Conference

FIRST-EVER VTR OF EAST TIMOR LIBERATION FORCES
AND LEADER XANANA GUSMAO

Time: September 3, 1991 2:00pm

Place: Tokyo YWCA
(1-8, Kanda Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku (map attached)
Tel. (03)3293-5421)

The Free East Timor! Japan Coalition will show to the media a VTR recently obtained from resistance forces in Indonesian-occupied East Timor. The VTR, which consists of scenes of a FALINTIL liberation force guerilla camp and Xanana Gusmao, the commander of FALINTIL and leader of CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance), is the first of its kind to reach the outside world since Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony on December 7, 1975.

In the videotaped message to the Japanese people, Xanana appeals for support for the East Timorese people's struggle for self-determination. The resistance leader also appeals to the United Nations to intensify efforts toward a solution based on negotiations which include representatives of the East Timorese poeple.

The Free East Timor! Japan Coalition consists of ten grassroots groups supporting the East Timorese' right to self-determination. It is a member of International Federation for East Timor, an NGO affiliated with the the United Nations Department of Public Information. The coalition presented portions of Xanana's statement to the United Nations Decolonization Committee in New York on August 8. It will make the video itself available for viewing at the UN this fall.

The video of scenes of life in the guerilla's mountain camp was taken with an 8mm camera by FALINTIL and was smuggled out of the territory by a clandestine network.

East Timor was in the process of decolonization from Portuguese rule when, on December 7, 1975, Indonesian land, sea and airborne forces invaded the territory, roughly equal in area to Shikoku. Indonesia ignored United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling for immediate withdrawal and continued assaults on the population which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands. In July 1976 Jakarta declared East Timor its "27th province," and in the years since has stationed large numbers of its troops in the territory. These keep the population, herded into concentration camp-type "resettlement villages", under surveillance and periodically engage in offensives against the FALINTIL guerillas in the rugged mountainous interior.

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CNRM's all-pervasive resistance network and the Timorese Catholic Church are foci for the peoples' aspirations to one day live in freedom and dignity. Xanana is revered by the people and has come to symbolize their hope for independence.

In 1989 Timorese Bishop Carlos Belo sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar in which he implored the UN to conduct a referendum in East Timor to allow the Timorese, whom he said were "dying as a people," to freely choose their own destiny. The Secretary-General is now overseeing negotiations between Portugal, the rightful administrator of the territory under international law, and Indonesia, but representatives of the East Timorese have yet to be included. In a meeting with an international group of parliamentarians this March, de Cuellar stated that all UN resolutions on East Timor are still in force and that the East Timorese have the same right to self-determination as the people of the Western Sahara and Namibia, other conflict areas where the UN has facilitated peace negotiations.

The strong international condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait last year and rising worldwide sympathy for the aspirations for self-determination of nations emerging from under foreign domination has created a favorable climate for a negotiated solution of the East Timor conflict.

The fact that the first-ever video of the resistance forces and leader Xanana is addressed to the Japanese people is indicative of the importance of Japan's position on the issue. While Japan has never formally recognized the integration, as the largest source of economic aid to the Suharto regime, it is seen by the East Timorese as contributing indirectly to the occupation. In the light of recent calls in Tokyo to link economic aid more closely to human rights issues and arms control, the VTR message from the mountains of East Timor presents a timely challenge to the Japanese public and government.

Speaking at the press conference will be Cancio Noronha, a young Timorese refugee residing in Australia, Kijima Masamichi of the Tokyo East Timor Association, and Jean Inglis of the Kure YWCA East Timor Concerns Group.

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